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THE struggle for beauty nowadays has become almost as keen as the struggle for bread. Man, unlike the lower animals, is not content with the unkempt necessities of existence for his surroundings. They must bear a certain relation to his spiritual nature; they must feed and clothe his soul by means of those harmonies of form and color which are produced by decorative art.

THE soul possesses imagination and sentiment and craves the sympathy of things possessing these qualities, hence even in savage life the paddle of the canoe is not only shaped for propelling purposes, but is so decorated that its appearance will awaken vibrations of pleasure in the supernatural nature of its possessor.

AS man develops in civilization his desire for art rapidly increases, and he wishes above all things that the casket of the body, which he calls his home, shall yield comfort and delight by means of its artistic belongings, that every object shall be a work of art.

MANY people entertain the false idea that a work of art means either a picture or a statue, but we are rapidly coming back to the idea, so well understood by the ancients, that every union of the useful with the beautiful, whether it takes the form of bed or balcony, cabinet or candelabrum, cartoon or chromograph, chest or cupboard, furniture or fresco, girandole or gem, leather or lace, mantelpiece or mosaic, metal work or marquetry, table or tapestry, wood carving or wall paper, is a work of art.

IN choosing correct furnishings for the home it is not difficult to understand the helplessness of most people on this most important question and their desire for guidance. It requires a long and serious study of the artistic possibilities of form and color, before any one, even a person gifted with natural taste, can venture to correctly choose the furnishings of any apartment, consequently the likes and dislikes of an individual have, in the majority of cases, no relation with what is correct taste.

EVEN when a natural perception for beauty has been cultivated by a knowledge of the possibilities of decorative art, by reason of the fact that so many house furnishing goods are manufactured after the manner of ready-made clothes, chiefly in loud, showy effects, to capture the dollars of people that lack taste, no opportunity is given for the exercise of cultivated taste, unless costly furnishings are purchased. Hence it is that the majority of houses are furnished to satisfy the inexperienced likings of the individual occupying them. The dealer or decorator, who ought to know more about decorative art than his customer, but frequently does not, takes his cue from the customer, and the result is chaos instead of order.

HOW shall the customer become educated sufficiently to distinguish the evil from the good? How is he to choose belongings whose combined effect will cause his mind to vibrate by the influence of the purest art?

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER is the medium between expert designers and manufacturers of furniture, on the one hand, and the customer anxious to be informed as to what objects of household decorative art are most worthy of appreciation, on the other. It informs its readers as to the artistic and earnest toil of studio and workshop. It reveals all that is worthy of recognition in the wide world of decorative art, and in so doing is educating a taste for all that is truly beautiful, and creating a wider demand for all kinds of art products. Its writers and illustrators are men and women of vigorous caliber, who are continually in search of the beautiful, and whose aims are to exploit the simplest as well as the supremest achievements of decoration.

A NEW YORK physician has had an immense glacial boulder, that weighs ten tons, placed in the center of the family lot in Woodlawn Cemetery, by way of a future monument to his memory. Only his name is chiseled on one of its sides, but otherwise no effort will be made to smooth or ornament its rugged exterior. This is not as it should be. A monument nowadays calls for a display of decorative art. The money spent in hauling the rock from its rest in a wild pasture, one hundred miles away, could be better spent in creating a marble sarcophagus, sculptured with a lesson of beauty for men's eyes for all time. The reactionary craze for big boulders as monuments goes back to the time when men were cave-dwellers and their minds were sunk in the mire of ignorance, fanaticism and barbarism. To glorify matter and not idea, to thus maintain that dirt is dearer than art, is an offensive misuse of time on the part of the disembodied spirit.

SCREENS are to be seen everywhere in the Dragon Empire; they are carved of teak-wood and handsomely painted with various figures and devices. In some parts of China bedsteads similar to our own are used; they are curiously carved, with drawers underneath and shelves for holding toilet necessities, all of which are hidden out of sight by doors which look like a beautiful screen.

The rooms in the different suites of apartments are separated one from another by the carved wooden scroll work for which the Chinese are famous. It is usually dark, and gives a very rich and handsome appearance to the whole interior, which is dull and dark—owing to want of windows—until the myriads of lanterns are lighted. The carving is sometimes gilded, and sometimes the wood is left in a state of nature with a high polish. Doorways are often half filled in with it; again, a low, deep frieze is seen all around the room. The women's apartments particularly are decorated with the carved work. Whatever can be imagined as contributing to pleasure and the support of luxury is to be found in the secluded quarters devoted to the women. The men of China say that upon entering the apartments of the women they, like all good husbands, leave worldly cares and the remembrance of them behind on the door mat, and take them up again when they go out. They visit these places for no other purpose than to drink deep from the full cup of pleasure of this life.

THE art of window dressing, like the methods of making magazine illustrations, is improving with age. Five years ago the retail merchant would not have believed it possible to present so many attractive window pictures in his store front as are given to-day, and, mayhap, five years hence he will

think scornfully enough of the pretty show displayed in this year of grace while comparing it with the gorgeous mounting then apparent.

All of which suggests the thought that perhaps as a people we are slowly working up to that national school of art the lack of which foreigners so greatly deplore in Americans.

Thousands of dollars are spent annually in New York in dressing shop windows, and particularly those that grace the frontals of the palatial stores that line Broadway, Fourteenth and Twenty-third streets, and Sixth Avenue.

England may be a nation of shopkeepers, but she might send her merchants to New York, with great profit to themselves, to take cognizance of the manner in which their American brethren display their wares to catch the passing eye. Especially is this likely to be the case during holiday week—that great holiday of the year when Christmas gifts and joys should, like the rain from heaven, fall upon the just and upon the unjust.

Never before in the history of trade have holiday goods been offered at prices so low, and judging from the shop windows, Santa Claus fully appreciates the hard times and has come loaded with such heaps of ridiculously cheap toys that it will be a very sad thing if every child this year did not appreciate something of Christmas.

Window dressing has become an art and requires an artist's eye and deft touch to create the pleasing effects so constantly displayed. Ordinarily this is accepted as a matter of course; it is only when comparisons are made with the past that the rate of progress is discerned. While the suffering and wretchedness all about has left little time or money for those who are used to making much of the holidays, the shopkeepers have been busy, and the people stand a good chance of receiving an artistic education merely by observing closely the shop windows.

AND what an array of tempting wares to attract the dollars of holiday purchasers! In one window tapestry, with drapery of brocaded satin, forms a background for vases of the finest wares, candelabra, portrait plates, onyx and brass tables bearing Italian marbles, and a superb cabinet of polished wood lined with plush rich with gems of art. There is an exquisite piece of Venetian glass in iridescent tints, flecked with gold; a finely carved ivory lamp screen, pitchers and vases of porcelain with a mounting of delicately wrought silver, together with other rare bric-à-brac, serve to hold the attention of every Christmas shopper.

Elsewhere there are rugs from Turkey, brasses from Benares, ivory figures and delicate china from Japan, ingenious toys from Germany, vases from France, linens from Belgium and Austria, all so artistically arranged that the eye revels in the harmonious settings.

A furniture house has the vast window arranged as a sumptuous Louis XV. boudoir, the various pieces in silk brocade and gold, with costly cabinets, mirrors and napones.

In the music stores are highly finished piano and organs in beautiful woods. Every description of stringed instrument may be found in their comprehensive and expansive collections exhibited, chief among which are shown a quartet of very beautiful harps which revolve upon a circular platform. They are of finely polished wood, inlaid with pearl, and are heavily trimmed with gold—fit instruments for a celestial choir. Guitars and mandolins, delicately inlaid with mother-of-pearl, music boxes, banjos and tambourines—all of the finest make—swell what is perhaps the finest musical exhibit ever displayed in this city.

We might go on forever describing the handsome furniture, beautiful draperies and carpets, artistic bronzes, serviceable novelties in silverware, cutlery and table accessories; the jewelry, banquet lamps, sofas, silk pillows, souvenir spoons, toilet requisites, fur millinery, gowns and girdles. Then the toys! Figures of Santa Claus surrounded with steam engines, trolley cars, steam boats, Christmas trees ablaze with electric lights, dolls, wagons, books, calendars, dainty slippers, silver mounted purses, inkstands in brass and china, pottery, cats, dogs, donkeys, horses, camels, fire engines, patrol wagons, skates, gold combs, cuff buttons, picture frames, trays, match boxes, jewel boxes, billiard tables, blocks, miniature china sets, cooking sets, and an endless lot of novelties of every sort. Never was there a more artistic exhibit in the shop windows than at this season, and to judge from the immense crowds of shoppers everywhere, the story of hard times seems only a myth.